



**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
OFFICE OF GOVERNOR DANIEL J. MCKEE**

April 6, 2021

The Honorable Marvin Abney
Chairman, House Committee on Finance
State of Rhode Island General Assembly
82 Smith Street, Providence, RI 02903

RE: Related to Article 1 - Section 15 - Rhode Island Promise

Dear Chairman Abney:

I am writing to express my strong support of Article 1 - Section 15 - Rhode Island Promise. This article would institutionalize the Rhode Island Promise program at the Community College of Rhode Island, ensuring that the 2021 graduating high school class is not the last group of Rhode Islanders eligible for this program.

This program was created because, as a state, we know that receiving a post-secondary degree is necessary for both the success of an individual, and for Rhode Island to grow our economy. College is too expensive -- it can place a significant financial burden on families. Rhode Island Promise made college accessible to every student, regardless of socio-economic status or race. It also helps level the playing field in an already inequitable system and creates a path to a good paying job for thousands.

Since Rhode Island Promise began in 2017, more students are enrolling and completing at CCRI, achieving the goals that the program was set out to achieve. Specifically, in the four years the program has existed, CCRI has:

- more than doubled the enrollment of first time, full-time students who continue their education right after high school, and had increases of 250% for students of color;
- surpassed the national average for students on track to graduate in three years. (CCRI this year hit 30% in 2020 while the national average is only 22%); and
- created a college matriculation culture throughout Rhode Island; with a 15% increase in college going rate across the state (not just at CCRI).

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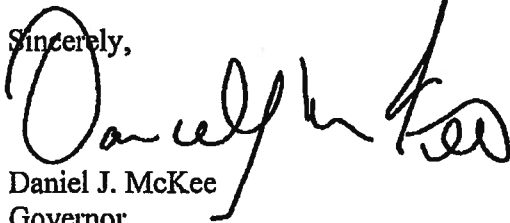
More than 6,520 students have been able to go to college because of this program, and these scholars represent every community in our state – from Providence with over 950 scholars, to Jamestown, and everything in between.

This program has supported all students but, has dramatically helped low-income students and students of color. Low-income students in both Rhode Island Promise cohorts achieved a 2-year graduation rate 2.6 times higher than the fall of 2016 comparison cohort (i.e. the year before Promise), and students of color had a 2-year graduation rate 6 times higher. The 3-year graduation rate for both groups 1.7 times higher.

With the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the state, we need this program now more than ever. If we want a resilient economy, we need to continue to make college beyond high school an option to every Rhode Islanders.

I am proud to support this program and to institutionalize it in the fabric of our state. I want every student to know that college is an option -- together, we can remove the uncertainty of whether families will be able to afford it or not.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel J. McKee", written over the printed name and title.

Daniel J. McKee
Governor

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Finance